

Luke's passion narrative, not unlike the fourteen Stations of the Cross, has Jesus take us through fourteen movements. They include:

1. The institution of Holy Eucharist, This is my body and in this cup a new covenant.
2. A Double crossing. The hand of my betrayer is with me at this table.
3. Self-promoting ambition. Let the greatest among you be as the least.
4. The prophetic Christ. The cock will not crow today until you have three times denied you even know me!
5. Anguish in the Garden. His sweat became like drops of blood falling to the ground.
6. Freedom denied and apprehension. Would you betray the Son of Man with a kiss?
7. Yes Peter's fears, exactly as foretold. I do not know what you are talking about.
8. A big council meeting with the chief priests and scribes. Tell us, are you the Messiah?
9. Pitiful leadership. Who should decide? You handle this case Pilate.
10. Alright, here's your choice Barabbas or Jesus. What will it be?
11. Daughters of Jerusalem don't weep for me.
12. Father forgive them.
13. Into your hands I commend my spirit.
14. And finally, burial according to custom.

The events we commemorate this week are truly the most defining moments in all humankind's experience. They detail the climatic redemptive actions lived by Jesus, son of the Living God! The re-unifying work of God's Salvation Plan is accomplished to perfection. We see in these events much of the drama of modern day life. Feasting, betrayal, power and greed, denial and lies, conspiracy, a lynch mob, indecisive and weak leadership, lots of guilt, and a bunch of legalisms! Really it is a whole lot of ugly! But Jesus moves through all of this and still he says "Father forgive them." Mercy!

God will sacrifice His Only Son, the Redeemer though, not because humankind is bad. Quite the opposite, it is rather because, God is so faithful, and we that precious. The life, death, and resurrection of Jesus are more than God's answer to fallen human nature. Jesus was, and has always been God's, first and only plan. It's a plan which does naturally the one thing, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit always do. That is Love! In deep passionate holiness, almost irrational to human faculties! That's the kind of love God invites us to encounter and share as we begin this Holy Week. Amen